



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

REPORT TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION

DATE ISSUED: November 10, 2005 REPORT NO. PC-05-318

ATTENTION: Planning Commission
Agenda of November 17, 2005

SUBJECT: Initiation of an amendment to the Progress Guide and General Plan and the Southeastern San Diego Community Plan to allow mixed-use development in the general area of 22nd Street and Commercial Avenue.

OWNER/
APPLICANT: BRIDGE Economic Development Corporation, (BREDCO), Bronze Triangle Community Development Corporation, the MACC Project.

SUMMARY

Issues – Should the Planning Commission INITIATE a land use plan amendment to the Progress Guide and General Plan and the Southeastern San Diego Community Plan pursuant to Municipal Code Section 122.0103? An amendment to the Progress Guide and General Plan and the Southeastern San Diego Community Plan has been requested to allow for mixed-use development and residential density in the 55-74 du/ac range for a 4.35-acre-site in the general vicinity of 22nd Street and Commercial Avenue.

Staff Recommendation – INITIATE the plan amendment process.

Community Planning Group Recommendation – At the regularly scheduled and noticed planning committee meeting of October 10, 2005, the Southeastern San Diego Planning Committee voted (7-2-1) to recommend initiation of a General/Community Plan amendment with conditions (see Attachment 1).

Environmental Impact – If initiated, the proposed plan amendment and future discretionary actions will be subject to environmental review.

Fiscal Impact – Processing costs would be paid by the applicant.

Housing Impact Statement – The Southeastern San Diego Community Plan designates the 4.35-acre-site for a combination of Industrial and Residential (10-15 du/ac) (see Attachment 2). Based on the existing land use designation, 13 to 20 dwelling units could potentially be developed onsite. The applicant has requested a land use designation that would allow 55-74 dwelling units per acre for a maximum yield of 322 units onsite. The

applicant has indicated a desire to develop the site with 266 units, of which a minimum of 225 would be affordable. Impacts to housing supply and affordability would be evaluated in more detail if the proposed amendment is initiated.

This initiation request does not constitute an endorsement of the project proposal. A staff recommendation will be developed once the project has been fully analyzed. This action will allow the staff analysis to proceed.

BACKGROUND

The area being requested for initiation is a 4.35 acre-site on the south side of Commercial Avenue between 21st Street on the west and Cesar Chavez Parkway on the east. The site area also extends south in an irregular manner along Julian and Irving Streets (see Attachment 2). The site is currently mostly vacant and is owned by the San Diego Unified School District but is under long term lease to the applicant. The only buildings on the site are a five story warehouse building, maintenance facility and a carpentry shop at the western edge of the study area and a recycling facility at the eastern edge of the study area. Immediately to the south on Julian Avenue are single-family houses and immediately to the north on Imperial Avenue are a variety of industrial and warehouse uses and vacant land.

That portion of the project site along the Commercial Street frontage (3.03-acres) is currently designated as Industrial and zoned I-1 in the Southeastern San Diego Planned District Ordinance. The remainder of the project area (1.32-acres) is designated for Residential (10-15 du/ac) and zoned MF-3000 in the Planned District Ordinance.

The applicant has requested a general/community plan amendment to redesignate the site from Industrial and Residential (10-15 du/ac) to a mixed-use designation that would allow both commercial and residential uses with a residential density of 55-74 du/ac. The Southeastern San Diego Community Plan does not have a mixed-use designation that would accommodate these uses. If initiated, the appropriate land use designation for the site would be analyzed which could include a new land use designation. In addition, the requested general/community plan amendment would be reviewed with a request for a rezone and other discretionary actions.

Other Projects in Immediate Vicinity

Along the Imperial/Commercial Street corridor, three other projects are in process or being considered by potential applicants (see Attachment 3).

- The Housing Corridors project is located on the 2600 block of Imperial Avenue and is now in review. The applicant is proposing development of 50 housing units, all affordable to very low-income households. Additionally, 3,600 square feet of retail or office uses are proposed. The project is requesting a site development permit and a rezone to allow mixed-use and an affordable housing density bonus so that the proposed number of housing units can be approved. A public hearing has not yet been scheduled.

- The Farmers Market project is located on the north side of Commercial Street and the south side of Imperial Avenue. A developer has met with Planning Department staff to discuss redeveloping the site for mixed-use including high density residential. The developer is still considering development concepts and nothing has been formally submitted to date.
- AMCAL Multi-Housing, Inc. is considering a 160-180 unit development at 29th Street and Commercial Ave. All units would be affordable. Nothing has been formally submitted to date.

Attachment 3 identifies the location of these projects in relation to the subject site at 22nd Street and Commercial Avenue.

Other Pending Community Plan Amendments

Two other community plan amendments are currently under review in Southeastern San Diego (see Attachment 4).

- The Bayview Residences project is requesting a general/community plan amendment to redesignate the former Bayview Hospital site at 26th Street and Island Avenue to a high density category to accommodate 313 units on a 2.85 acre-site. The Planning Commission initiated this amendment on December 11, 2003. A public hearing before the Planning Commission has not yet been scheduled.
- The Grant Hill Townhomes is requesting a general/community plan amendment to redesignate one parcel of a four parcel site from commercial to residential (10-15 du/ac) to accommodate 6 single-family units at 30th Street and Island Avenue. The Planning Commission initiated this amendment on March 27, 2003. A public hearing date before the Planning Commission has not yet been set on this amendment either.

DISCUSSION

Before a general/community plan amendment can be initiated, Section 122.0104 of the Municipal Code requires that any one of three initial criteria or all four supplemental criteria specified in the code must be met. The Planning Department does not believe that any of the following three initial criteria can be met:

- (1) The amendment is appropriate due to a mapping or textual error or omission made when the original land use plan or local coastal program was adopted or during subsequent amendments;**
- (2) Denial of initiation would jeopardize the public health, safety or general welfare;**

- (3) The amendment is appropriate due to a material change in circumstances since the adoption of a land use plan or local coastal program whereby denial of initiation would result in a hardship to the applicant by denying any reasonable use of the subject real property.**

The Planning Department does, however, believe that all of the following supplemental criteria can be met:

- (1) The proposed land use plan amendment is consistent with the goals and objectives of the Progress Guide and General Plan and the Southeastern San Diego Community Plan.**

The proposed land use plan amendment embodies the goals and objectives of the Progress Guide and General Plan for redeveloping and rehabilitating underutilized areas of the City; objectives in the Housing Element and Strategic Framework Element for increasing housing opportunities for existing and future residents for all income groups; and continuing to identify areas for residential development including already developed areas where existing development patterns should either be maintained or altered. In addition, the requested plan amendment would meet the Strategic Framework Element objective of encouraging the revitalization of older transit corridors through plan designations and zoning that permit a higher intensity of mixed-use development.

Additionally, the requested plan amendment would meet the following objectives of the Southeastern San Diego Community Plan: The Social and Economic Element recommends providing housing for all family sizes, particularly larger families; the Commercial Element recommends rehabilitating existing commercial centers and improving both vehicular and pedestrian access; and the Transportation Element recommends fully utilizing the East Line Trolley to revitalize and redevelop land adjacent to the trolley line and to maximize the use of public transportation.

The proposed amendment could adversely affect general and community plan goals related to the protection of industrial lands. The Progress Guide and General Plan states: “Protect a reserve of manufactured lands from encroachment by non-manufacturing uses.” In addition, the Southeastern San Diego Community Plan contains goals related to protecting industrial areas from encroachment by commercial or residential uses. However, the site is primarily vacant and is located in an area where commercial uses have displaced many of the industrial uses. If initiated, the area’s viability and attractiveness in terms of industrial uses would be evaluated, as well as the appropriateness of this site for mixed-use development.

- (2) The proposed land use plan amendment appears to offer a public benefit to the community or City.**

The requested land use amendment would allow for the creation of additional affordable and market-rate housing for existing and future residents in the community. The project site is located within walking distance of public transit that would offer community

choices to future residents of the site. Additionally, the requested amendment would accommodate the development of commercial retail services for area residents.

(3) Public services appear to be available to serve the proposed increase in density or intensity of use.

Southeastern San Diego is an urbanized area and all needed public services are available in the community. If the plan amendment is initiated, the adequacy of public services and facilities will be analyzed during review of the plan amendment.

(4) City staff is available to process the proposed land use plan amendment without any work being deferred on general fund supported programs or ongoing plan updates.

Staff is available to process this amendment request without delaying general fund programs or ongoing plan updates, as the Planning Department's work program includes staff time for non-general fund development projects. However, delays in processing the plan amendment could occur based on staff levels and workload. The costs associated with processing this amendment, should it be approved, would be borne by the applicant.

CONCLUSION

Planning Department staff recommends that the amendment process be initiated to study the issues and impacts related to the proposed land use change from Industrial and Residential (10-15 du/ac) to a mixed-use designation that would allow residential use in the 55-74 du/ac range. The specific land use designation and associated rezone would be determined through the general/community plan amendment review process.

The following issues have been identified with the initiation request. If initiated, these issues, as well as others that may be identified through the course of the amendment analysis process would be evaluated.

- Compatibility between the proposed General/Community Plan amendment and the City's Progress Guide and General Plan, the Strategic Framework Element and the Transit-Oriented Development Design Guidelines
- The appropriate land use designation and density range for the site
- Impacts related to the loss of industrially-designated land in the Southeastern San Diego community
- Potential redesignation of a broader area than just the project site
- Impacts of structure height(s), shade and shadow patterns associated with new development and architectural character on surrounding development

- Impacts on community circulation system, including proposed street closures and vacations and whether any circulation improvements would be necessary
- Impacts to housing availability and affordability
- Provision of pedestrian amenities and streetscape improvements associated with planned new development
- Project relationships to transit and consistency and the extent to which transit-oriented development objectives are implemented
- Ability of the project to provide additional recreational amenities as part of the development proposal
- Impacts to public facilities and services including parks and public schools

Although staff believes that the proposed amendment meets the necessary criteria for initiation, staff has not fully reviewed the applicant's development proposal. **Therefore, by initiating this General/Community Plan amendment, neither the staff nor Planning Commission are committed to recommend in favor or denial of the proposed amendment.**

Respectfully submitted,

Mary P. Wright
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Attachments:

1. Southeastern San Diego Planning Committee Recommendation of October 10, 2005
2. Community Plan Amendment Initiation Location Map
3. Other Potential or Proposed Projects on Imperial/Commercial Corridor
4. Other Community Plan Amendments Pending in Southeastern San Diego
5. Aerial Photo of Subject Site and Surrounding Area
6. Ownership Disclosure Statement